



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

Saint Hilda of Whitby (A.D. 614 – A.D. 680)

Written by Maria Vagianos

Saint Hilda is commemorated on November 17

“Of all the sites chosen by monastic architects, after Monte Cassino, I know none grander and more picturesque than that of Whitby,” writes the 19th century French historian, Charles de Montalembert. “The Esk, which flows through a hilly country...forms at its mouth a circular bay, commanded on every side by lofty cliffs. On the summit of one of these rocks, 300 feet above the sea, [Saint] Hilda placed her monastery, on a platform of green and short seaside turf, the sides of which slope abruptly to the northern ocean.”¹ Known in the Saxon language as *Streaneshalch*, (“the Bay of the Lighthouse”), the austere and sea-swept monastery of Whitby contained within its cloister gates the lightsome Hilda, “whose life was a bright example, not only to herself, but to all who desired to live well.”² Inspiring her subjects with her love and devotion to Christ God, and with her wise counsel and virtuous labors, St. Hilda became the most preeminent Anglo-Saxon abbess of the early Middle Ages.

Saint Hilda was born in A.D. 614, the second daughter of Prince Hereric and Lady Breguswitha of the Deiran dynasty. Pagan tribal warrior culture thrived in early Anglo-Saxon England. The kings of Northumbria were considered scions of the Norse god Woden. Paying homage to their god of wisdom and war, the young royals chose for their daughter the Germanic name *Hild* meaning “battle or war.” Some ten years before Hilda’s birth, the pagan King Aethelfrith conquered the Northumbrian kingdom of Deira and banished King Edwin, along with Edwin’s nephew, Prince Hereric, to the neighboring Celtic kingdom of Elmet (near present day Leeds). Thus was Hilda, daughter of the blood-royal, born in exile.

While she was yet an infant, Hilda’s father was poisoned at the court of Ceretic, king of the Britons, in whom he had sought refuge. At this time the young Breguswitha had a prophetic dream, “that she was seeking for [Hereric] most carefully, and could find no sign of him any-



where; but after using all her industry to seek him, she found a most precious jewel under her garment, which, whilst she was looking on it attentively, cast such a light as spread itself throughout all Britain; which dream was brought to pass in her daughter....”³

About the year 616, Aethelfrith was killed in battle, and King Edwin regained the throne of Northumbria with its dual kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira. The widowed Lady Breguswitha returned to Deira with her two young daughters, Hilda and Hereswitha, where she raised them in the royal court of their imperial great-uncle Edwin. In 627, through the instruction of Bishop Paulinus of York, King Edwin and his royal court were converted to Christianity. On Pascha day of that same year, thirteen-year-old Hilda was baptized with members of the royal family at York in a small wooden church constructed for the occasion.

Little is known of St. Hilda’s life following her baptism. The Venerable Bede relates that she lived as a pious noblewoman in King Edwin’s

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royal court until the age of 33. In 647, forsaking her life as princess in the royal house of Deira, St. Hilda journeyed to East Anglia where she lived for a year until she was able to depart for Chelles in Gaul (France) to live as a nun. It was at Chelles that St. Hilda desired to join her sister in the monastic life. Her elder sister Hereswitha had been married to King Aethelfric of East Anglia. Upon the death of her husband, Hereswitha had retired to a convent in Chelles. In early seventh century England, convents were scarce. Because the Gallo-Frankish monasteries were already established, royal Englishwomen travelled to Gaul to receive their monastic training in “the cradle of the Anglo-Saxon monastic communities.”⁴ Before St. Hilda could cross over to Gaul, however, St. Aidan, Bishop of Northumbria, beseeched her to return to her native kingdom. Bishop Aidan besought St. Hilda to establish a convent on one hundred acres of land on the north bank of the River Wear.

During this time, St. Hilda and her small group of companions learned the Celtic monastic traditions from St. Aidan. Having spent a year in the community near the River Wear, St. Hilda was appointed abbess of the monastery of Hartlepool, succeeding its foundress, Heiu, the first nun of Northumbria. Hartlepool provided a new experience for the young abbess; it was the first time she governed a double monastery of monks and nuns. The governance of a double monastery in England was unique in that two communities of monks and nuns were united, with the monks placed under the rule of the abbess of their neighboring nuns.⁵

From the earliest days of monasticism in the East, the double monastery had its origins. The first double monasteries developed in Egypt, as communities of nuns gathered around Desert Fathers such as St. Pachomius of Egypt. Through the influence of St. John Cassian, the tradition of the double monastery was disseminated to France, Belgium, and Germany. In Ireland, St. Brigid of Kildare founded the first double monastery. Double monasteries were common also in Spain, and to a lesser extent in Italy. The royal Anglo-Saxon women who received their monastic education in France returned to England where the custom of the double monastery was transplanted and took root in the early seventh century. Double monasteries flourished through the golden age of English monasticism of the eighth century, until their destruction during Danish invasions of the late ninth century.

For seven years, St. Hilda governed the double monastery of Hartlepool. Her natural wisdom, love, and devotion to God became well known. Often, Bishop Aidan and other religious and learned men, who revered

her holy virtues, visited St. Hilda and imparted their counsel to her on the particular difficulties in the spiritual rule of two monastic communities. With zeal and diligence, St. Hilda employed her God-given talents to enrich the monastery under her authority.

In A.D. 655, King Oswy of Northumbria vanquished the pagan king Penda of Mercia at the Battle of Winwaed. The king fulfilled his promise to our Lord that he had pledged on the eve of battle. In gratitude for his victory, King Oswy consecrated his infant daughter Elfleda to Christ and entrusted her to the care of St. Hilda at Hartlepool. He also distributed twelve parcels of land on which to establish monasteries. Knowing of St. Hilda's gifts of administration and organization, the king charged the abbess to build a monastery at Whitby on six parcels of land for ten families.

Under St. Hilda's spiritual tutelage, Whitby monastery became a center of religious learning and instruction, increasing in number and renown. St. Bede the Venerable reveals that “...she put this monastery under the same regular discipline as she had done the former; and taught there the strict observance of justice, piety, chastity, and other virtues, particularly of peace and charity....[H]er prudence was so great, that not only [ordinary] persons, but even kings and princes, as occasion offered, asked and received her advice.”⁶ Indeed, St. Hilda was like a superior of a theological seminary. She encouraged careful study of the Holy Scriptures and the Church Fathers, and developed a manuscript library and scriptorium. In addition to their rigorous spiritual education, the monastics of Whitby were required to learn ancient law, history, language, and literature. In the words of St. Bede, “She obliged those who were under her direction to attend so much in works of justice, that many might be there found fit for ecclesiastical duties, and to serve at the altar.”⁷ St. Hilda's spiritual guidance and direction produced five sainted bishops: St. Bosa, Bishop of York, St. John, Bishop of Hexham, St. Hedda, Bishop of Winchester, St. Otfar, Bishop of Worcester, and St. Wilfrid, Bishop of York.

Perhaps the most famous of her monks was St. Caedmon, the humble shepherd who became the father of English poetry. Recognizing the spiritual gifts bestowed on him, St. Hilda bid that Caedmon should be instructed in the Holy Scriptures and doctrine so that he might translate their themes into holy verse and psalm. Since St. Caedmon composed his verse in the vernacular Northumbrian dialect, he was instrumental in transmitting the words of the Holy Gospel to the common folk who did not understand the Latin tongue.

So esteemed was St. Hilda and her great monastery

that King Oswy enjoined the holy abbess to host thereat the historic Synod of Whitby in 664. Within the monastery's great hall, high above the "brilliant white...bright cliffs" of the North Sea, bishops and clergy convened to reconcile the Roman and Celtic Paschal traditions. The two Northumbrian kingdoms celebrated holy Pascha according to different customs: the Ionan or Celtic tradition (from the Irish monks of Iona, Scotland) and the Roman tradition from the missionaries of Rome. After a prolonged and bitter debate, the synod decided in favor of the universal Roman custom, and by the King's command, this practice was adopted throughout Northumbria.

For the remaining years of her abbacy, St. Hilda served our Lord with fervent faith and tireless devotion, and inspired the love of all who knew her. In the words of St. Bede, "[A]ll that knew her called her Mother for her singular piety and grace....[She] was not only an example of good life, to those that lived in her monastery, but afforded occasion of amendment and salvation to many who lived at a distance, to whom the fame was brought of her industry and virtue."⁸ During the last seven years of her earthly life, St. Hilda was afflicted with a tormenting fever, marked by severe inflammation. In the last year of her life, the disease worsened, and she suffered from terrible internal pain. Nevertheless, she always gave thanks unto God, and with motherly love instructed her flock, "for by her own example she admonished all persons to serve God dutifully in perfect health, and always to return thanks to Him in adversity, or bodily infirmity."⁹

Early on the morning of November 17, 680, St. Hilda received Holy Communion, and summoned her spiritual children in the monastery to her bedside. For the last time, the most beloved abbess exhorted her flock "to keep the peace of the Gospel between them and all men."¹⁰ As she was speaking thus, with great peace and joy, she commended her pure soul unto our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. St. Hilda reposed at 66 years of age, "after having performed many heavenly works on earth, [passing] from thence to receive the reward of the Heavenly life."¹¹

Later that evening, St. Begu, a nun of Hackness monastery, and close friend of St. Hilda, beheld in a dream the soul of the blessed abbess being escorted by a bright retinue of angels to Heaven. At daybreak the next morning, the monks of Whitby journeyed thirteen miles to Hackness to tell their brethren of Abbess Hilda's repose. The nuns responded that they had already learned of the news through St. Begu's vision. "[T]hus it was by Heaven happily ordained, that when some saw her depar-

ture out of this world, the others should be acquainted with her admittance into the spiritual life which is eternal."¹²

Soon after her repose, St. Hilda was commemorated in England. The saint's holy relics, however, were lost during the Danish invasions of the ninth century. In 867, the hallowed monastery of Whitby fell under a Viking attack and was destroyed. It was later rebuilt after the Norman Conquest. According to local legend, sea birds flying over the monastery dip their wings in homage to St. Hilda.

*Dismissal Hymn
Plagal of fourth tone*

In thee the image was preserved with exactness, O Mother; for taking up thy cross, thou didst follow Christ, and by thy deeds thou didst teach us to overlook the flesh, for it passeth away, but to attend to the soul since it is immortal. Wherefore, O righteous Hilda, thy spirit rejoiceth with the Angels.

*Kontakion. First Tone
The soldiers standing guard*

For three and thirty years in the world, chaste and modest, * for three and thirty years as a righteous monastic, * thou camest, O Hilda, unto Christ's stature, the perfect man; * and on being cleansed through grievous bodily sickness, * thou wast taken up in light and glory to Heaven, * where thou dost pray God for us.

Endnotes

¹ de Montalembert, Charles Forbes René. *The Monks of the West: From St. Benedict to St. Bernard*. Boston: Thomas B. Noonan & Co., 1902, p. 261.

² *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation With an Introduction by Dom David Knowles*. Everyman's Library, No. 479. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1954, p. 204.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁴ de Montalembert, p. 654.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 698.

⁶ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. p. 202.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁰ de Montalembert, p. 726.

¹¹ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. p. 201.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

The icon of St. Hilda is from:
<http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/hilda.htm>

Axios!

Father Deacon Mark was born on September 23, 1959 in San Antonio, TX to Ben B. Beesley Jr. and Joan Laura Marie (nee) Kniepkamp. He has one younger sister, Susan Donnell. He married Cindy (Ariadne) Bunyard on August 8, 1981.

Fr. Mark attended Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX, and received a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1983. After working as an architectural designer in San Antonio for several years, he enrolled in graduate school in London. While in England, Fr. Mark was led to leave architecture and pursue the ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the church in which he was raised. He attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1990. Following his ordination as a Lutheran

minister, he served a mission parish in the Kansas City area. In 1995, he and his family moved to Oelwein, IA, where he served two parishes as a Lutheran pastor.

With a growing interest in iconography and the theology behind them, Fr. Mark and his family drew closer to Orthodoxy. As he read the Early Church Fathers, he began to notice inconsistencies in the theology of the Lutheran Church. He also had a growing frustration with the anti-liturgical direction in which the Lutheran Church was heading. Fr. Mark began to meet with a neighboring Lutheran pastor who shared

similar frustrations. That neighboring pastor is now our Fr. Michael Waples of the parish in Chicago.

Fr. Mark read *A Way of a Pilgrim* and began to pray the Jesus Prayer. Among other Orthodox books, he read *Once Delivered to the Saints*, by Fr. Michael Azkoul. Having questions raised by the book, he began correspondence with Fr. Michael and soon, Fr. Mark and his family knew that they had to become Orthodox.



Metropolitan Ephraim with Deacon Mark and his family

In 2005, Fr. Mark was offered a position at Hill Partnership Architects in Wentzville, MO. The family moved to the St. Louis area and became part of St. Katherine of Sinai Mission Church, pastored by Fr. Michael Azkoul. Fr. Mark and his family were baptized on October 1, 2005 at

Prophet Elias parish in St. Paul, MN. Fr. Mark was made a Reader in 2006 and was ordained to the Diaconate at Holy Transfiguration Monastery on June 22, 2008. The same day his son, Anthony, was tonsured a Reader.

Fr. Mark and Ariadne are blessed by God with three children: Anastasia (20), Anthony (18), and Tatiana (16).

Fr. Mark continues to work as a Project Architect at Hill partnership and is completing his doctoral studies in theology at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church

Albany, Georgia

By the grace and mercy of our one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the fledgling parish community of the Most Holy Trinity was established in Albany, Georgia. The foundation of a believing and worshipping community of Orthodox Christians is an occasion of great rejoicing and thanksgiving. It is, however, both a joyous culmination and a prayerful and humble beginning.

It started with searching for true Orthodoxy when the Mathes family, by the grace of God, was led to Holy Transfiguration Monastery through the connection they had with Fr. Basil, who guided and strengthened them in the Faith. Our Lord showed His mercy and His immeasurable love through the love and care of His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim. He contacted the Mathes family personally, instructed them further in the Faith, and gave them the hope that someone from the clergy of the Monastery would come to visit.

It was purely out of Christ's love for us sinners that on December 25, 2006, His Grace, Bishop Demetrius, together with Fr. Barsanuphius, visited the Mathes family and the faithful of Albany. There was the thought of having a church, and the blessed, unforgettable visit of His Grace prepared the right ground for the seed of this thought to grow strong roots, since the Mathes family owned a house that had previously been rented out for lodging and now could be used for a place to worship.

On the Great Saturday of Holy Lent, 2007, the Mathes family was baptized and received into the Church at Holy Nativity Convent. Now with new strength and a burning desire to have a place of worship, the work of renovating the old house started.

On April 5, 2008, Bishop Demetrius arrived to bless the house and Holy Place for divine services. That same evening, following the Akathist service, His Grace accepted written proposals from the faithful of a name for the patronal feast. It was chosen by lot to be named in honor of and under the protection of the Most Holy Trinity. The following day, His Grace celebrated the first Divine Liturgy. During His Grace's sojourn in the city, he

met with the new parishioners as well as with those who had read of the new parish in the local newspaper and just wanted to know more about the Orthodox Faith.

After prayer and consultation with His Grace, further renovations were done to open more space and upgrade the house for liturgical purposes and to meet all the current governmental codes for public use. With the request and blessing of Bishop Demetrius, Steven Suelzle came from Seattle, WA, and worked for over two weeks to construct the Iconostasis, analogion and other fixtures for the holy temple. The upstairs storey was renovated and furnished to accommodate overnight visitors.

Bishop Demetrius was present for the first patronal feast of the parish during the week of Pentecost. He was accompanied by Hieromonk Fr. Theodore and Hierodeacon Fr. Andrew from Holy Transfiguration Monastery.

His Grace worked the whole week on setting everything properly in the Holy Place and taught the faithful how to serve Reader's Services correctly when there is no clergy. He was also available to speak of the Orthodox Faith, bless homes, pray for the sick and give encouragement to all. During the festal weekend, there were the vigils and services for the Saturday of Souls commemorating all the

deceased, the Sunday of Pentecost with Vespers including the Kneeling Prayers and the Monday of the Holy Spirit.

His Grace blessed the faithful of Albany with his fourth visit the weekend of July 18-19, together with God's talented chanter, Demetrios Antonopoulos. Bishop Demetrius served the Holy Unction service, Vespers, the Vigil, and the Divine Liturgy on Saturday and Sunday, which further strengthened and edified the parish community.

The members of the small Orthodox community in the name of the Most Holy Trinity are grateful and very much in debt to His Grace, Bishop Demetrius, for his love, his service, his guidance, his prayers, his generosity and sacrifices, working tirelessly to make our church and house of God beautiful. His Grace's presence has given such strength to our parish.



We are also grateful to all who have been so kind and generous: Holy Transfiguration Monastery and Holy Nativity Convent and the Convent of the Meeting of the Lord for the varied and priceless donations of a holy chalice, the cross, coverings for the Holy Table, oil lamps, liturgical books, icons, educational materials, candle holder, candles, etc; Steven Suelzle for the time and labor of construction; an anonymous benefactor from St. Nectarios parish in Seattle who donated the plane fare for Steven; the anonymous donors of the icons that will be in the Holy Altar; Michael Salemi who, at His Grace's request, came from Queens, NY, to help Steven with the construction; David and Anastasia Nichols for the eighteen Major Feast icons; George Kamberidis for the censer; Stavroula Fotopoulos, Eleni Zorbas and the Lazafratis family for their kindness and generosity in many ways. Our good God alone knows the name of each one even if we have forgotten or omitted to mention everyone.

May the Lord God remember in His Kingdom the founders, members, friends and benefactors of this holy house.

Since there is no priest currently assigned to serve the parish permanently, "reader services" are generally conducted every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday and for the major feasts. In future, there will be visiting clergy to serve the Divine Liturgy. If anyone knows of believers or seekers who live near or will be visiting the Albany, GA area, please inform them of the parish.

For more information, please contact Athanasios or Maria Mathes at: (229) 436-8229. The parish is located at: 222 West Oglethorpe Blvd. Albany, GA 31701.

O Lord, O Lord: Look down from Heaven and behold and visit this vine and perfect that which Thy right hand hath planted (Psalm 79, verses 14-15 LXX as used in the hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Trisagion).



The Orthodox Church in the Republic of Georgia

By novice Otari

Georgia is an ancient Christian country in which the First-Called Apostle Andrew preached the Faith of our Saviour. The country was finally converted by St. Nina (Nino) of Cappadocia in the 4th century. Georgia has almost 1700 years of Orthodox Christian heritage. Its landscape is dotted with beautiful churches and monasteries, and its liturgical calendar is rich with saints.

Last year, our Mission in Georgia celebrated its tenth anniversary. It all started in 1997 when a group of clergy and faithful, who had departed from the official Georgian Patriarchate because of the latter's involvement in the heresy of Ecumenism, were accepted under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston.

Today, our Church in Georgia has three parishes: Dormition of the Mother of God in Tbilisi, served by Fathers Gelasi and Zurab; St. Nicholas in Kutaisi, served by Father David; and a mission parish of St. George in Guria.

For the past 10 years, our people in Georgia have suffered much persecution from the official church. This

persecution reached its peak in 2002, when a church building of our parish in Guria was savagely demolished by a mob, instigated by the local clergy of the official church.

But by the mercy of our Saviour, the situation has changed lately. With generous donations from abroad, as well as with contributions from parishioners, two magnificent churches were built in Tbilisi and Kutaisi in 2007.

Our Church in Georgia has an impressive record of religious publications: the New Testament, Lives of the Saints, writings of the Holy Fathers, liturgical calendars, articles written by our fathers themselves defending the Orthodox Faith from innovations, etc. All in all, over three dozen books have been published in the past ten years.

In September, God willing, the first ever pilgrimage to Georgia will take place. Led by Bishop Demetrius of Carlisle, it will provide a marvelous opportunity for our faithful to meet their Georgia brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as to discover the spiritual wealth of the country.



Fr. Gelasi and parishioners in the Dormition of the Mother of God Church, Tbilisi

Future Trips with St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor

St. Andrew's-by-the Sea, Bahamas: Dec. 25, 2008–Jan. 4, 2009
Convent of Meeting of the Lord, Stanwood, WA: Dec. 26, '08–Jan. 2, '09
St. Xenia Parish, Guatemala: January 31–February 8, 2009
St. Peter and Paul Mission Parish, Tucson, AZ: March 2009
St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery, Kelseyville, CA: March 2009

Please contact Demetri Patitsas, by emailing thespfl@gmail.com or calling (814) 386-5254.

Saint Dunstan's Celebrates One Year Anniversary

By Fr. David Belden

On May 19/June 1, 2008, St. Dunstan of Canterbury, "An Orthodox Presence in Toronto's West End," celebrated its first anniversary with a visit by His Eminence, Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto.

In Lent, 2007, we were called by the Rev'd. David Burrows, Rector of St. Olave's Anglican Church, and asked to meet with him and his son, Jeremy. Rev. Burrows expressed an interest in meeting a former Anglican priest who had become Orthodox. When he asked where in the (416) area code we lived, I gave him our home address. "But that's the street St. Olave's is on!" he exclaimed. At our first meeting, Rev. Burrows offered us the use of the chapel at St. Olave's for Orthodox services, rent free. When asked, as our host, to name our "Orthodox Presence in Toronto's West End," without hesitation Rev. Burrows said: "St. Dunstan, last Orthodox Archbishop of Canterbury."

Not only is St. Dunstan's an Orthodox presence in the west end of Toronto, it is convenient to members of our Church who live and/or work in the area. Thus far, we are only able to hold services on weekdays in order to

avoid conflict with Anglican Sunday services, so we do not take Orthodox away from their home parishes.

With the celebration of Vespers on the feast of St. Dunstan, the chapel was full to overflowing. The service concluded with the 40-day prayers for the new-born Nicholas Bitaxi, son of Michael and Christine, and his mother. A coffee hour followed in St. Olave's parish hall, at which a walking stick, carved with symbols of St. Dunstan by a member of the congregation, was presented to the Metropolitan.

For this occasion, a wonderful icon of St. Dunstan, painted by Euphemia Briere of Brookline, MA, was presented to us.

On Theophany, 2008, Jeremy Burrows was baptized. His mother, "presbytera" Penelope is now a catechumen. These are the first fruits of St. Dunstan's. Rev. Burrows continues his good work in preaching and teaching the Orthodox Faith to his Anglican flock—preparing the way for others to come.

Please pray for God's continued blessing on the miracle which is St. Dunstan's!



Metropolitan Makarios at St. Dunstan's for first anniversary vespers



Metropolitan Makarios holding Nicholas Bitaxi on his fortieth day



Fr. David Belden presents a walking stick to Metropolitan Makarios



Presbytera Justine venerating the cross

*Please join us in a celebration honoring
His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim
for his twenty years of service as the Chief Shepherd
of the Holy Metropolis of Boston
Sunday, September 22/October 5, 2008*

***Matins and Divine Liturgy**
Seven o'clock in the morning
St. Mark of Ephesus Orthodox Cathedral*

***Banquet**
One thirty in the afternoon
The Hilton Hotel
25 Allied Drive
Dedham, Massachusetts*

*A presentation of Byzantine Chant
by the St. Mark of Ephesus Cathedral Choir*

To purchase Banquet tickets, please mail full payment to:
St. Mark of Ephesus Orthodox Cathedral
P. O. Box 129
Roslindale, MA 02131-0129

Tickets must be purchased by Monday, September 15, 2008.

Adults: \$80.00/person Choice of: Salmon or London Broil
Children (twelve & under): \$30.00/child (Fruit Cup, Chicken Finger Dinner, Dessert)

Make checks payable to: St. Mark of Ephesus Orthodox Cathedral

*Please clearly indicate the number of adults and children and banquet choices,
and kindly include your full name and address and contact phone number.*

Except the Lord Guard the City

Introduction

*In view of the depressed economy, the collapsing housing market, the climbing fuel prices, the escalating food costs, the spiraling unemployment, the credit card crunch, the astronomical national debt, the sinking dollar, the proliferating narcotics, the miasma of filth and immorality in our schools and in society, the epidemic of teenage pregnancies, the pandemic of STD's, the leap in murder, mayhem, rape and violent crime rates in our streets, the seepage of illegal immigrants, the floods, the fires, the tornadoes, the hurricanes, what is there to thank God for? Well, to begin with, we have not had a terrorist attack like 9/11 **for seven whole years!** Further, many of the terrorists' leaders are on the run, or have been captured or executed. In addition, countless Islamic money-laundering terrorist rings in America have*

been uncovered and broken up—all this, thanks in great part to tightened security and the efforts of our government administration in protecting our nation from further assaults.

But, as the Psalms teach us:

Except the Lord guard the city, in vain doth he watch that guardeth her; it is vain for you to rise at dawn (Ps. 126:2).

One day after 9/11, when the country was paralyzed with fear and panic (remember?), the telephone rang at St. Philaret's House, the diocesan headquarters for the Metropolis of Boston. His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim, took the phone. A parishioner of our Cathedral of St. Mark of Ephesus, Athanasius George, was on the line. "Your Eminence, don't you think it would be appropriate to add a special

prayer to the Liturgy? – a prayer for the protection and safety of our country?” he asked. Yes, it would certainly be appropriate, replied the Metropolitan. And thus was born the special petition that we repeat to this very day in every Divine Liturgy:

Though we have warranted chastisement because of our many sins, we flee to Thee; for we put not our trust in weapons to save us, but we look to Thee to protect this nation and to defend all Orthodox peoples from those that wage war against the faith of the Christians. Wherefore, we entreat thee: have pity on us, hearken and have mercy.

Thanks, in large part, to the efforts of Father John Fleser and Robert Charles, the former Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement under Colin Powell, and briefly under Condoleezza Rice, a delegation from the Metropolis of Boston was able to express our gratitude for God’s protection of our nation to President Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush on June 18, 2008, by presenting to them an icon of Christ and a laser cut wood icon of St. George the Great Martyr. Mrs. Anita McBride, Chief of Staff to the First Lady, received the gifts at the White House on behalf of the President and his wife.

The following is Robert Charles’ account of that meeting:

On June 18th, 2008 a remarkable event occurred. Metropolitan Ephraim, together with Father Andrew and Father John Fleser, who conceived of this idea and never let the light go out, were invited by the President and First Lady to the White House. They arrived, after a long drive and night prior in Washington, DC, and there they were able to deliver—after nearly two years in the planning—a commissioned icon of Our Savior, and a laser cut wooden icon of St. George from Holy Nativity Convent, as well as three Psalters, two prayer books and

a lovely, wrapped package of candles—to the President and First Lady—in the White House, private quarters, delivered to Mrs. Anita McBride, the First Lady’s Chief of Staff (who was also Nancy Reagan’s and Barbara Bush’s) in person—and with the promise that by that night all their words and their (much awaited—truly over months by the White House) icons and candles would be in the hands of the First Lady and President. The level of reverence shown to them was, while we might expect it in the Church, objectively moving, even breathtaking. They were treated with enormous respect.

They rode the family elevator to the second floor, as the Metropolitan’s walk is slow because of his stroke. They were shown rooms in the White House I did not know existed, even after working in three Republican administrations and two White Houses. The three were the object of official photographs and an official White House photographer’s full attention—for nearly an hour. They were allowed—no one does this—to bring their car into the White House compound and park there to come inside. The Chief of Staff read and listened to every word they spoke and explained how much prayer means to the President and First Lady and then heard how every Orthodox priest and parish says a prayer—explicitly—for the President in every Liturgy. They were quiet, moved and deeply appreciative, with respect, grateful. I have known this Chief of Staff for years—she was more reverent and appreciative, moved and receptive, truly taken with the gifts, than I have ever seen her. The Chief of Staff apologized that Laura Bush was, while she had hoped to be there in person, this minute apologetically “just being a mother” and trying to get her newly married daughter into a home in Baltimore as a “Mom.” She noted that Laura Bush “will love these candles” from the Convent. She smelled them and marveled at their fragrance and



Bobby Charles, Fr. John Fleser, Mrs Anita McBride, Metropolitan Ephraim and Archdeacon Andrew at the White House

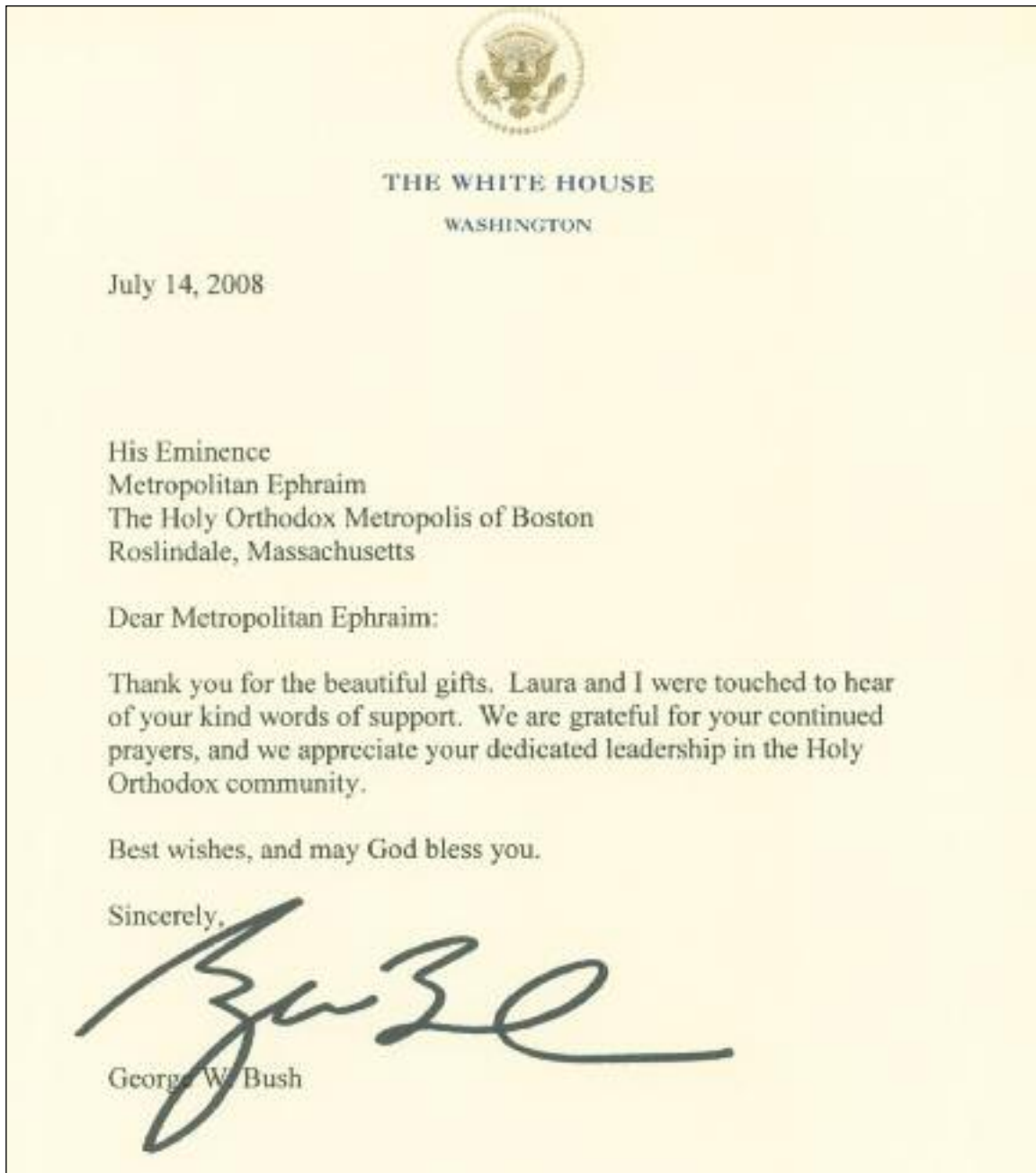


Archdeacon Andrew and Metropolitan Ephraim look on as Fr. John Fleser presents an icon to Mrs Anita McBride

having been made by the Nuns of the Holy Nativity Convent she asked ... and where was the Convent? and the Monastery? and if someone wanted to visit, where were they? and, repeatedly, thank you so much ... and then, when she looked at the back of the icon, she loved the icon of Our Savior, but the icon of St. George, when she read the words on it, they got very quiet. Aloud, she said—reading—“St George...the liberator of captives ...” and she looked up, very quietly and repeated it. The Metropolitan and Father John and Father Andrew noted that they wanted these to be personal gifts, and they hoped that there would be strength drawn from them in the months ahead by the President and First Lady ... and the

Metropolitan brought light and smiles to their faces with warm and funny stories—and they—the White House staff present—seemed moved. So, that is it. I would never have imagined it would be so possible, so perfect, so lovingly designed and delivered by Father John and by the Metropolitan and Father Archdeacon Andrew. It is just a set of wondrous, if mortal, facts for you to know. And yes, we have many pictures—and so do the President and First Lady now, as the official photographer had three cameras and used them often ... With wonder still—at the marvel of the inspiration and the outcome—with all warm wishes and love,

Bobby Charles



Friends of Ugandan Orphans Report

by three members of the Committee

When His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim, first visited Uganda in the year 2000, he was concerned about the level of poverty and the large number of orphaned children he encountered. Upon his return to the United States, he formed a group known as the Benevolent Missionary Society in order to oversee some potential ways of helping our mission church communities and the orphans who are members of our various churches in Uganda.

An initial idea was to organize a sponsorship program here. We requested a list of orphans in our parishes there, along with their photographs. When we received this, we made an appeal to the faithful in our churches here to sponsor an orphan for \$20 a month. Most of these children were placed with other families, and the \$20 was sufficient to help improve their situation with better clothing, shoes, and funds to pay their school fees. We received a generous response and soon we had sponsors for nearly all the children. The Missionary Society collected the funds and sent it to the priest in charge of administering that program.

In addition, the Missionary Society collaborated with the clergy in Uganda to determine what sort of economic project each parish could develop to help support the priest and the parish. These economic projects were funded by our donations, and some of them were successful, especially the grain mill at St. Nicholas parish. This mill is still in operation today. Other projects involving livestock, especially chickens, were less successful, primarily due to sickness and the rising cost of feed. A sewing room project was established, although very irregular electrical power availability caused some problems.

After the first year of orphan sponsorship, the priest who was handling that program was no longer remaining in our jurisdiction, and therefore we stopped sending the funds due to lack of a person to administer the program. Donations that continued to come in for orphan sponsorship were kept here in a special fund in our Benevolent Fund Account. When members of the Missionary Society would visit Uganda, they would oversee the distribution of funds for the orphans that had remained in our parishes under the direction of our faith-

ful clergy there. They would interact with the children, assess their needs, and ascertain that any money given for them was used for the intended purpose.

In the year 2004, certain members of the Missionary Society decided to form a sub-committee called the Friends of Ugandan Orphans. This committee could direct its efforts solely toward helping the orphan children while the Missionary Society would focus on assisting the clergy and the parishes, as well as developing a potential monastery there. It was in this same year that the first Walk-a-thon was held for fund raising purposes. In the year 2006, during Metropolitan Makarios' pastoral visit to Uganda, several members of the Missionary Society accompanied him. During this visit, it was decided to select a number of orphans who had finished school to the eighth grade and who showed academic promise. They would be sent to a boarding school to receive their

secondary education, their tuition and living expenses being paid by the Friends of Ugandan Orphans. To date, we are supporting 18 students in this program. Twelve of these students had lived in an orphanage for abandoned and HIV positive children. The first year of their sponsorship, they were sent to a school located on the grounds of our St. Catherine parish in the village of Seeta. When a priest was available to visit, Saturday evening Vespers and the Divine

Liturgy on Sunday morning was held in the chapel there. The services were for the Orthodox children, but soon, some of the other students decided to attend. After a period of time, many of these students requested to be baptized. Fr. Spiridon, the Director of the clergy in Uganda, was in charge of instructing these students and was able to provide them with catechetical materials. During the Episcopal visit of Metropolitan Makarios in 2007, 12 of these students were baptized. These youngsters will undoubtedly become the "yeast" for an Orthodox community in the village where their orphanage is located.

This school year, which began in February of 2008, the children were moved to a new school that has better facilities and more academic opportunity. The new school is located near our newly established monastery of St. Nahum, and the



Metropolitan Makarios, Hierodeacon Barsanuphius and the 12 baptismal candidates

school has offered to transport the children there on Sunday mornings for the Divine Liturgy. At the time of their transfer to the new school, we were pleased to have our first long term volunteer from among the faithful here in our country. Andrew Bergdahl is a college student whose mother is now a nun at Holy Nativity Convent in Brookline, MA. He decided to spend the whole school year in Uganda and help tutor our sponsored students in math, physics, and computers. To date, he has done a remarkable job, not only helping our students, but also assisting in developing raised garden beds to grow a variety of vegetables at the monastery of St. Nahum, as well as instructing the young novices there in church chant, the structure of the Divine services, and the lives of the saints. Andrew was also hired to teach some of the courses at the school our students are attending. We are very grateful for Andrew's dedication and help, and hope that he will be an inspiration to others who may want to offer their time and service to the needs of the mission there in Uganda.

In addition to sponsoring the education and living expenses, as well as medical needs of our students, we are also assisting one of the novices at St. Nahum's monastery

who had not yet finished his secondary education. There was recently a young girl who had been abandoned and was staying with a family near the monastery. She found her way to the church one day, and when we learned about her, we found a sponsor to help in her support.

This is a synopsis of some of the work we have been doing in Uganda. There is now a new development in that a clergyman named Fr. Philaretos, in the country of Tanzania, has joined us along with a small flock who had been with him when they were in the jurisdiction of the Alexandrian Patriarch. He was received during the pastoral visit of Metropolitan Makarios in February of 2008. Fr. Philaretos is also in charge of a number of orphans for whom he had been responsible in the orphanage where they had lived. The Friends of Ugandan Orphans has recently filled a shipping container to send items such as clothing, shoes, bicycles, prayer books and icons to the orphans. There is also some furniture and donated used computers for them. We are grateful to all those who continue to send donations in support of this work of our church.

2008 Walk for Ugandan Orphans

by Angela Masterjohn

The 2008 Walk for Ugandan Orphans was our fourth. It was so nice to see the same people who participate every year. As wonderful as it is to see all of them, especially the Fathers from Holy Transfiguration Monastery, we are losing ground! We need more networking from our brothers and sisters in Christ. You can walk yourself and ask people to sponsor you, or just sponsor someone if you physically can't walk. I think that we should start asking for donations now and not wait till next spring. That's almost a whole year to approach people to help. One way is by changing the way we ask. Instead of saying, "Would you like to donate money?" change that to, "How much would you like to donate to help our orphans?" Then ask if we can count on them to help us in future years. If other organizations get results in this same manner, there's no reason to think it wouldn't work for us. If you have relatives that live far away in other states or another country, ask them for a donation. If they say they can't afford much, ask them to please give whatever they can. We know there have been some hesitations lately in regard to the safety of the money, but we've come up with pretty strict guidelines as to what, where, and how that money gets distributed. The money doesn't get used unless everyone on the committee agrees on how best it can benefit the orphans. Otherwise, the money will not be touched. So please trust that your donations are put to a good purpose, and we hope you will try to help! Giving alms is a blessing, as we all know!



Fr Panteleimon and Eutychios Kalogerakis at the 2008 Walk for Ugandan Orphans



Some participants in the 2008 Walk for Ugandan Orphans

Pillars of Orthodoxy Church

Carlisle, Pennsylvania
by Fr. Rodion Laskowski

The year was 1973 and Deacon Photios Touloumes was asked by his family to be Godfather to his newly born nephew Demetrios. Fr. Photios was happy to accept this sacred responsibility but in conscience felt it necessary to explain to his family that they all needed to be united in oneness in their confession of the Orthodox Faith. They all had to place themselves under the omophorion of a True Confessing Orthodox hierarchy, and in those days that meant His Eminence, the blessed Metropolitan Philaret of New York, and the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. (Alas, this once staunchly confessing Orthodox Synod ultimately abandoned its pure confession by uniting with the syncretistic Moscow Patriarchate in May of 2007). God touched the hearts of *Yiá-yia* Vasiliki Touloumes and her children and thus was born the Orthodox Parish of SS. Photios the Great, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus, the Pillars of Orthodoxy, in Mount Holly Springs, PA. The first service was in fact the Baptism of little Demetrios Touloumes in the farmhouse which overlooks the majestic parish temple which sits on 31 acres of rolling farmland. Subsequently, the first Liturgies were celebrated in the humble living room of *Yiá-yia* Vasiliki by Fr. George Lewis who would come from Basking Ridge, NJ, on a regular basis. Later, a small Evangelical United Brethren church was purchased and transformed into a warm and compunctionate Orthodox temple which served the parish for approximately twenty-five years. A few small holes in Fr. Rodion's rasso testify to the many winters spent there to the accompanying warmth of the old wood stove which had to be fired up before Liturgy. Fr. Demetrios Serfes was the first resident pastor and served the community for several years before unexpectedly moving on to West Virginia in 1982.

At that time the parish seriously began to consider their future. There was an adequate place to celebrate Divine Services but no land for expansion, no gathering place for the faithful to come together in fellowship, and now no priest. Once again Fr. Photios took the reins and visited parishioners, exhorting them to commit themselves to supporting a married priest with a family, as is our Orthodox tradition. He approached Fr. Rodion Laskowski who was serving a small mission in Connecticut with the request that he move to Mt. Holly Springs with his family to become rector of the parish. Fr. Rodion and Matushka Anna have now completed their 26th year with the parish.

In 1985, the blessed repose of St. Philaret the Confessor of New York brought much sorrow to confessing Orthodox

Christians. Shortly thereafter, the Russian Synod Abroad began to reinterpret and even ignore the Anathema Against Ecumenism which the bishops had so rightfully proclaimed in 1983. Our parish found it necessary to separate itself from the Russian Synod and eventually find refuge under the omophorion of Archbishop Auxentios of blessed memory. Once again, we stood at the crossroads and chose the narrow way of enduring slander for the sake of our immaculate Orthodox Faith. We lost brethren in the process but found new and steadfast brothers and friends. Christos and Katina Patitsas, orphaned by the split with the Russian Synod, began to travel to our parish from Ohio. Subsequently, Dr. Patitsas would establish his ophthalmology practice in Huntingdon, PA., 1½ hours from church. Eventually, it was our blessing to witness his ordination to the Diaconate in our temple. To this day, we enjoy his reverent service before the Holy Table.

As our parish grew, it became apparent that we were rapidly outgrowing our home, and once again it was Fr. Photios who offered a new challenge by offering us a sizable inheritance upon his repose if we would commit to building a new temple on land that had been promised to the parish for that purpose. He would give this offering so that a suitable monument to Orthodox worship could be erected in this place where an Orthodox presence was scarce. The challenge was taken up by the parish with the help of a few blessed souls known



to God who have sacrificed beyond belief to build the new Pillars of Orthodoxy Church. Reader Demetrios and Euphrosyne Touloumes came to that first organizational meeting to fulfill their promise of a donation of five acres on Old York Road in Carlisle, only to astonish us with the news that they had reconsidered and decided to offer to God the full 31 acre parcel upon which the church now stands. With God for us, who can be against us!

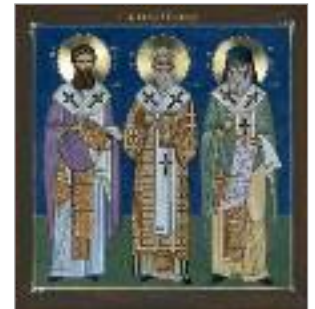
On the feast of St. Artemios the Great Martyr in 1997, Bishop Moses celebrated the Liturgy in our old church to the drumming of a torrential rainstorm. The plan for the day was to bless the new land, but all despaired of accomplishing it due to the conditions outside. Suddenly, during Holy Communion a brilliant ray of sunlight penetrated the window above the entrance to the temple and a glorious sunny interval ensued, allowing us to process to the new land. More miraculously, His Grace blessed the perimeter of the property with Holy Water, sustaining only minor soiling of his shoes. As we recessed to trapeza at the ever memorable T-Jimmy's Restaurant, the foul weather returned with a fury.

Construction started in September 1998, and we celebrated our first Liturgy on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent, 1999. Metropolitan Ephraim and Bishop Moses dedicated the new Pillars of Orthodoxy Church on the 7th Sunday of Pascha that year. Progress on improving our new facilities was slow for a few years as we recovered from the exhaustion of the building program, much of which was finished by our own parishioners. At that time, little did we know that our dear Fr. Photios' days were becoming numbered as the ravages of cancer slowly became more apparent. And little did we know that soon we would be unexpectedly called upon to fulfill the challenge we were given those short years before. Fr. Photios was laid to rest in May of 2002 near to his parents in our very own parish cemetery. Soon after, we began to actively pursue the expansion of our parish church with the aid of the generous inheritance which had been offered by Fr. Photios from the personal sacrifices of his own life. Progress was slow and the obstacles many. The estimates on our original plans were double our budget and necessitated us starting over. In the interim, our second priest, Fr. Peter, and Matushka Dee Farnsworth arrived to help us in our holy work. They have earned the love and respect of our parish by their love and labors.

Now we await in a few short months the dedication of our new addition complete with its expanded trapeza, kitchen, classroom, offices, ecclesiarch's room, and its crowning touch, the adult baptistry that Fr. Photios always dreamed of. We are humbled before our Creator and God for the many undeserved blessings we have received from His bounty for which we did not labor. We are blessed with the relics of close to 200 saints. The entrance to our church is crowned with a beautiful icon of the Mother of God "Directress" with St. Photios the Great and St. Philaret the Confessor in supplication. We have recently received a new icon of our heavenly patrons with their relics embedded, written by the nuns of Holy Nativity Convent, and other holy things too numerous to enumerate. For these, we thank our loving God and Saviour Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother, as well as for the love of truth and the willingness to sacrifice of all our beloved parishioners, living and reposed, who intercede for us. We also humbly ask for the prayers of all the faithful and cordially invite you to receive the hospitality of our heavenly patrons for the 35th Anniversary and dedication of our new facilities in November.



Pillars of Orthodoxy Church
350 W. Old York Rd (Rt. 174 W)
Carlisle, PA
35th Anniversary Celebration
November 7-9, 2008



The parish of SS. Photios the Great, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus, the Pillars of Orthodoxy in Carlisle, PA. invite you to the celebration of their 35th Anniversary, the blessing of the new addition to their church and the namesday celebration of His Grace Bishop Demetrius of Carlisle on the weekend of November 7-9, 2008.

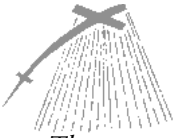
Events planned for the celebration will include the Vigil of the Feast of the Great Martyr Demetrius on Friday evening, the Festal Liturgy of the Saint on Saturday followed by meals, snacks and two lectures on topics to be announced. The day will conclude with the Great Vespers for the Resurrection.

Sunday will begin with Orthros, the meeting of the hierarchs and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. A festive trapeza including a pig roast will follow. An Open House for the community will be held on Sunday afternoon concluding with a lecture on the theme of the Temple of God and the worship of the Church. We will greet the evening with Vespers for our beloved Father and Confessor, St. Philaret of New York, and end our celebration with the Holy Liturgy on Monday morning.

Four meals will be provided: A light supper on Friday (available during Vigil for late arrivals); after Liturgy and prior to Vespers on Saturday; the banquet and pig roast on Sunday. Meals will be provided as hospitality in honor of our heavenly patrons SS. Photios, Gregory and Mark, but you must register for the meals you will be attending by calling: Xenia Fraker (717) 713-0404.

Rooms have been blocked off at Carlisle's Sleep Inn. If you call the hotel at (717) 249-8863 and book under Pillars of Orthodoxy, you can get the special rate of \$63.99 single or double occupancy.

We pray that many of our brethren will join us for the blessings of this joyous celebration.



About Our Logo A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

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THE DIOCESE NEEDS SUPPORT

“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward*, although delivered free of charge to all members of our Church, is in need of your support.



The Faithful Steward

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